

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-028-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER amend COC 34348
COC 67123

PROJECT NAME: Power line extensions to Chevron Field

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T.2N., R.103W.,
sec. 13, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$,
sec. 15., E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$.

APPLICANT: Moon Lake Electric Association

ISSUES AND CONCERNS: The routes as staked varied somewhat from the map attached to the application. The staked routes are generally shorter and have less resource impact. A GPS map of the changes is attached as Exhibit B.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: Moon Lake Electric proposes to construct extensions from existing power lines to provide service to oil and gas facilities in the Rangely Chevron Field. The table below identifies these extensions:

Moon Lake Electric Proposed Extensions			
Length of Extension	Number of Poles	Type of Existing Power	Well Number
321 ft	3 poles	12.5kV three phase	MC Hagood A13X
605 ft	2 poles	12.5kV three phase	MC Hagood A12X
535 ft	3 poles	12.5kV three phase	MB Larson A3X
922ft	4 poles	12.5kV three phase	McLaughlin 82X
800 ft	3 poles	12.5kV three phase	McLaughlin 81X
3183	Total		

Moon Lake is asking for a temporary construction right-of-way of 50 feet for the Chevron Field projects. The permanent rights-of-way will be 20 feet wide. Authorization will be by amending the two existing adjacent existing power lines:

Corresponding Permanent Rights of Way			
Amend COC #	Well ID	Length	Acres
COC 67123	McL 81X	800 feet	.367
Sub-Totals		800 feet	.367
COC 34348	MC H 12X	605 feet	.278
COC 34348	MB L A3X	535 feet	.246
COC 34348	MC H A13X	321 feet	.147
COC 34348	McL 82X	922 feet	.423
Sub-Totals		2383 feet	1.094
Project Total		3183 feet	1.461 Acres

The projects will consist of single wood poles with aluminum conductors. Raptor protection is incorporated in the structure design. Any open holes left overnight will be covered with planks to protect people and wildlife from injury. Access will be from existing roads and along the right-of-way. All surface disturbances will be confined to the right-of-way. No blade work will be needed. Rubber tired vehicles will be used for construction. Construction and maintenance activities will not be performed when soil conditions are too wet to adequately support vehicles and equipment. If equipment creates ruts in excess of three inches deep, all construction or maintenance will be postponed until conditions are suitable.

Moon Lake Electric will keep the power lines in safe and usable condition at all times in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code. If maintenance is required for immediate repair of the power lines, Moon Lake will be responsible for the rehabilitation of disturbed areas. There will be no PCB or any hazardous material used in the construction, operation, or maintenance of the power line.

Construction of the lines will be after BLM's approval and as needed by Chevron. Each project will take 3 to 4 days. Authorization will be by amendment to existing rights-of-way. The map (Exhibit A) and Plan of Development (Exhibit B) are attached and incorporated by reference.

No Action Alternative: The power lines will not be constructed and there will be no additional impacts.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

NEED FOR THE ACTION: Moon Lake Electric Association has applied for authorization to provide service to wells in the Rangely Chevron Field.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-53

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special air quality designations or non-attainment areas in the vicinity of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. However, airborne particulate matter should not exceed Colorado air quality standards on an hourly or daily basis.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: All of the proposed power lines are located in the Rangely Field which has been inventoried (Larralde 1981) and is covered by an agreement with the Colorado SHPO. There are no cultural resources reported in any of the proposed power line locations.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed power lines, listed above, in the Rangely Field/Coal Oil basin will not impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within Alkaline Slope and Clayey Saltdesert ecological sites, which are dominated by salt tolerant vegetation. The dominate plant community for these sites consist of greasewood, and various saltbrushes such as shadscale, Gardner saltbrush, mat saltbush, and fourwing saltbrush. The understory of these shrubs is dominated by western wheatgrass, Colorado wildrye, and squirreltail. Cheatgrass is an undesirable, invasive, and alien plant species that is present within the locality of the proposed action.

The soils within the project area are principally a Billings Silty Clay Loam (Alkaline Slope ecological site) and Chipeta Silty Clay Loam (Clayey Saltdesert ecological site). These soil types have a high clay content that is moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting forage production and hampering re-vegetation efforts.

Noxious/invasive weeds which occur in the area include halogeton and cheatgrass. Both of these species are highly adapted to disturbed soils.

Drought conditions are very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton, cheatgrass) have become dominate in portions of previously disturbed areas which provide little resource value and hinder efforts to meet Public Land Health Standards.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Both of the weed species found in the area are effectively controlled by establishment of seeded species within disturbed areas. The proposed seed mix, which includes non-native species, is recommended because its associated plant species are highly adapted to this site and offer the greatest opportunity to establish vegetation cover and the resultant soil stabilization, thereby providing a competitive interaction between seeded species and noxious/invasive weeds.

There is always the opportunity for other noxious weed species to be transported onto the proposed action locations by construction and support equipment

Prompt reclamation with successful establishment would prevent cheatgrass and halogeton from establishing on disturbed sites. If other noxious weeds were to invade the site, prompt control would prevent movement to the adjacent plant communities.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: The applicant will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass, noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods as outlined in the White River ROD/RMP or authorized in advance by the White River Field Office Manager. Application of herbicides must be under field supervision of an EPA certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The project area is encompassed by arid salt desert shrublands consisting principally of shadscale, basin big sage and greasewood. Herbaceous groundcover is comprised mainly of native grasses with low to moderate densities of halogeton and cheatgrass. These salt desert communities typically support species such as vesper and sage sparrow, western meadowlark, sage thrasher and horned lark. Species associated with these shrubland communities are generally typical and widely represented in appropriate habitat within the

Resource Area and region. The majority of disturbance involved in this action is located adjacent to existing roads, an area that typically assumes little to no nesting activity.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Powerpole installation associated with this project is expected to be completed in advance of the breeding season and would have no potential to interfere materially with nests. In the unlikely event powerline installation should be delayed into the breeding season, it would have minimal impacts on nesting, as all sites are either adjacent to existing roadways or involve relatively little surface disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no affect on migratory birds or their habitat under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: The project area is broadly encompassed by white-tailed prairie dog habitat. A field visit conducted during February indicated that relatively few (<5) prairie dog burrows may be negatively impacted by the installation of these powerlines.

Prairie dogs and their burrow systems are important components of burrowing owl habitat, as well as potential habitat for reintroduced populations of black-footed ferret. Burrowing owls, a State threatened species, are uncommon in this Resource Area. These birds return to occupy a maintained burrow system in early April and begin nesting soon after. Most birds have left the area by September. While burrowing owls have been documented in Rangely Oil Field, no burrowing owl nesting activity has been recorded near the proposed powerlines.

Under the auspices of a non-essential, experimental population rule, black-footed ferrets have been released annually in Coyote Basin (eight miles southwest) and Wolf Creek (13 miles northeast) of Rangely Oil Field since 1999 and 2001, respectively. The rule applies to any ferrets that may occupy or eventually be released in northwest Colorado and northeast Utah. Although there is no direct continuity between Coyote Basin or Wolf Creek and the project site (i.e., lesser physical barriers and habitats unoccupied by prairie dog) there is a strong likelihood that ferrets have colonized and successfully breed in Rangely Oil Field. Ferrets are wholly reliant on prairie dogs for food and shelter. Ferret breeding activities begin in early March, with birthing beginning in early May. Young ferrets generally begin to emerge by mid-July. There have been no verified sightings of ferrets, nor any known reproduction occurring in Rangely Oil Field.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Installation of additional powerpoles may have the potential to increase perching opportunities for raptors (e.g., golden eagle red-tailed and ferruginous hawk) that may prey on prairie dogs. To remedy this, all powerpoles involved in this action will be conditioned to deter raptor perching (i.e., crossarms and pole top) such that the project does not attract increased raptor use and increase the risk of depredation to prairie dogs.

As mitigated, this project would have no short or long term influence on prairie dog abundance or distribution by itself or as habitat for black-footed ferret or burrowing owl. The proposed powerlines encompass a small area in which relatively few single-entrance burrows will be affected. It is highly unlikely that any subsurface disturbance associated with this proposed action would intersect a prairie dog burrow system occupied by a ferret.

It is extremely unlikely that powerline installation would negatively impact the reproductive activities of prairie dogs, ferrets or burrowing owls. Surface disturbance involved with this action is virtually negligible and would have no possibility of affecting prairie dog or ferret populations.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no potential influence on prairie dogs as habitat for burrowing owl and black-footed ferret in the case of a no action alternative.

Mitigation: Powerpoles involved in this action will be designed to deter all raptor perching (i.e., crossarms and pole top) and remain effective in preventing raptor electrocution. It is requested that Moon Lake avoid drilling directly into any prairie dog burrow or mound system when installing powerlines. All powerline installation should involve as little vehicle travel as is necessary. It is requested in those instances where the powerlines will run cross-country (not adjacent to existing road) that Moon Lake employ the technique of back-pulling when possible.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: Public Land Health Standards for those special status species associated with white-tailed prairie dogs, including black-footed ferret and burrowing owl, in the Rangely Oil Field are currently met. As conditioned, this project would have no adverse influence on populations, available extent of suitable habitat, or the reproductive activities of these three species. Thus, there would be no influence on meeting the land health standard. Small incremental gains in perennial grass cover associated with successful reclamation and subsurface tillage associated with powerline installation may be expected to bolster local populations of prairie dogs and potentially benefit individual burrowing owl and black-footed ferret—effects consistent with continued meeting of the Land Health Standards.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the

generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The pipelines are in Stinking Water Gulch which is tributary to the White River below Rangely Colorado and the White River above the state line. Limited data is available for Stinking Water and this lower end of the White River. Past instantaneous measurements of flow and water quality for Stinking Water Gulch indicate the water to be high in total dissolved solids. An historic gaging station was located on the White River at the State line. This data indicated the water quality to good, but high in sediment during storm events.

A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. This lease/allotment is in a Category 1, Priority 2, watershed (The Lower White) identified in the Unified Watershed Assessment report. The state has reasons to believe this watershed has water quality problems (sediment and salinity loads) that may impair the watershed. Information needs to be gathered before total maximum daily loads (TMDL) will be determined.

The State has classified this stream segment as Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply and Agriculture. The state has further defined water quality parameters with table values. These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters. The anti-degradation rule applies to this segment meaning no further water quality degradation is allowable that would interfere with or become harmful to the designated uses.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Impacts to water quality from development of these pipelines would be similar to other surface disturbing activities. Some of the impacts would be exposure of soil surface to wind and water erosion, reduced water quality due to erosion of sediment and salt, off pipeline rights of ways, and piping or rill erosion where pipeline disturbance are exposed to climatic elements. These impacts would be short term until re-vegetation has occurred.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from not allowing the proposed action.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The proposed action will not have an affect on Sinking Water, which is currently well within the standards set by the State, and thus meets the Public Land Health Standard.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian habitat that would conceivably be affected by this action. The White River, representing the nearest aquatic habitat, is separated from the project area by about eight miles of ephemeral channel.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: This project would have no conceivable potential for influencing riparian attributes addressed in the Standards.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: *Affected Environment:* Baseline soils data have been collected for Rio Blanco County by the NRCS and are published in an order III Soil Survey. This survey is available for review from the White River Field Office. The table below identifies soil characteristics for the soils encountered from the proposed action.

Proposed Action	Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
North End	7	Billings silty clay loam	0-5%	Alkaline Slopes	2-8	Rapid	Moderate to high	>60

Proposed Action	Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
South End	16	Chipeta silty clay loam	3-25%	Clayey Salt-desert	4-16	Rapid	High	10-20

All of the soils identified in the table above have been mapped as being saline in the White River ROD/RMP.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Short-term impacts would be expected from any surface disturbing activity. Impacts from the proposed action would be loss of the protective vegetation cover, possible increase in salt and sedimentation during storm events and soil compaction from installation equipment. These impacts would be very short term and continue until successful re-vegetation has occurred.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: In the no-action alternative, neither the surface disturbance nor the impacts to soils resources would occur.

Mitigation: Re-establishing vegetation as soon as allowable would be favorable to control any erosion problems that may occur. Best management practices will need to be implemented to collect salts leaching from soils if it becomes a problem on the surface.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The proposed action will not affect the soil type's ability to meet the Land Health Standard.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within Alkaline Slope and Clayey Salt-desert ecological sites, which are dominated by salt tolerant vegetation. The dominant plant community for these sites consist of greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) and various saltbrushes such as shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), Gardner saltbrush (*Atriplex gardneri*), mat saltbush (*Atriplex corrugate*), and fourwing saltbrush (*Atriplex canescens*). Other brushes intermixed in the area are rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*) and big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). The understory of these shrubs is dominated by western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Colorado wildrye (*Elymus salinus*), and squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*). Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is an undesirable, invasive, and alien plant species that is present within the locality of the proposed action.

The soils within the project area are principally a Billings Silty Clay Loam (Alkaline Slope ecological site) and Chipeta Silty Clay Loam (Clayey Salt-desert ecological site). These soil types have a high clay content that is moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting forage production and hampering re-vegetation efforts.

Drought conditions are very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*),

cheatgrass) have become dominate in portions of previously disturbed areas which provide little resource value and hinder efforts to meet Public Land Health Standards.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would disturb a mid to low seral class of desert shrub community for a total of 2.62 acres. The short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. As this area has a component of cheatgrass and halogeton within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would slightly increase desirable plant species within the rangelands.

Previously this area has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities from a network of well pads, pipeline corridors, and access roads, which have resulted in a fragmentation and reduction of available, productive ecological sites.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas associated with the proposed action, including all cut and fill slopes and topsoil stockpiles, with Standard Seed Mix #1 of the White River ROD/RMP (B-19, Appendix B). Seeding rates in the ROD/RMP are shown as pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application, double the seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. Applied seed must be certified and free of noxious weeds and seed certification tags must be submitted to the Area Manager within 30 days of seeding.

White River ROD/RMP (Appendix B; B-19) Seed Mix # 1

Species (Variety)	Lbs PLS/ Acre	Range sites
Siberian wheatgrass (P27)	3	Alkaline Uplands, Badlands, Clayey 7"-9", Clayey Salt Desert, Cold Desert Breaks, Cold Desert Overflow, Gravelly 7"-9", Limey Cold Desert, Loamy 7"-9", Loamy Cold Desert, Loamy Salt Desert, Saline Lowland, Salt Desert Breaks, Salt Flats, Salt Meadow Sands 7"-9", Sandy 7"-9", Sandy Cold Desert, Sandy Salt Desert, Shale 7"-9", Shale/Sands Complex, Shallow Loamy, Shallow Sandy, Shallow Slopes, Silty Salt Desert, Silty Swale, Steep Slopes
Russian wildrye (Bozoiisky)	2	
Crested wheatgrass (Hycrest)	3	

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed action would disturb a small segment of the Alkaline Slope and Clayey Salt desert ecological sites. Therefore, the action would further fragment these areas to a minimal degree.

Early seral ecological sites associated with the proposed action lacks desirable plant species at an appreciable density and frequency level, thus are not meeting standards. This is due to the prevalence of cheatgrass and halogeton within the vegetative understory. A slight positive benefit would be received through a successful re-vegetation effort, thus increasing preferred plant species within this mid to low producing rangeland. Mid seral ecological sites at the

proposed action locality have acceptable components within the plant community and are meeting standards.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no aquatic habitats conceivably affected by this action. The White River, representing the nearest aquatic habitat, is separated from the project area by about eight miles of ephemeral channel.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): This project would have no conceivable influence on aquatic wildlife or habitat conditions addressed in the Standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This heavily developed portion of Coal Oil Basin is inhabited year-round by a small resident herd of pronghorn. These animals are acclimated to routine oil and gas production activities. A number of raptors forage opportunistically during the winter in Coal Oil Basin, the most common being rough-legged hawks, red-tailed hawks, and golden eagle. The project area and the surrounding area provide no special or unique habitat features in regards to nesting substrate.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: This project would have no conceivable adverse consequences on big game distribution or habitat quality as it involves minimal surface disturbance with virtually no removal of woody forage.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no potential influence on big game distribution or habitat quality in the case of a no action alternative.

Mitigation: None, but see mitigation for T&E Species section above.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): This project would not jeopardize the viability of any animal population. It would have no significant consequence on terrestrial habitat condition, utility, or function, nor have any discernible effect on animal abundance or distribution at any landscape scale. The public land health standard will thus be met.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: All of the powerlines are located in an area mapped as the Mancos Shale Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition II formation meaning it is known to produce invertebrate marine fossils and rarely vertebrate fossils.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely that any of the proposed power lines listed above, in the Rangely Field will impact any scientifically important fossil resources. It will be extremely difficult to identify important fossil resources due to the small disturbance caused by the power pole hole. Only the largest vertebrate remains would likely be recognized during excavation operations.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in the Artesia Allotment (06308), which is authorized for sheep use by Morapos Sheep Company during the late fall to early spring periods.

The soils within the project area are principally a Billings Silty Clay Loam (Alkaline Slope ecological site) and Chipeta Silty Clay Loam (Clayey Salt-desert ecological site), which are dominated by a salt tolerant desert shrub and grass community. These brush/grass communities are utilized by sheep for meeting forage requirements, particularly during winter months. These soil types have a high clay content that are moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting forage production and hampering re-vegetation efforts.

Drought conditions are very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton, cheatgrass) have become dominant in a portion of these disturbed areas which provide little forage value for livestock.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The individual proposed action would have minimal impacts on the authorized grazing use because the amount of new surface disturbance (2.62 acres) is nominal in regards to the scale of the allotment (43,347 total acres). However, previously this allotment has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities, which have resulted in a reduction and fragmentation of available rangelands and in a loss of forage for grazing use.

A portion of the short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. As this area has a component of cheatgrass and halogeton within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would increase desirable forage species within the rangelands on a limited basis.

Grazing use by sheep in the Allotment can be authorized from November 28th through April 20th. If the proposed action was authorized during this timeframe, it would have some limited impacts while sheep are grazing. This is due to the increased activity associated with the development of the proposed action and temporary decrease in rangelands available for grazing. Impacts to livestock grazing may include such influences as a modification in sheep distribution, reduction in available forage, and impediments to livestock grazing and movement.

Overall, this individual proposed action would have no significant direct impact on the authorized Animal Unit Months (AUMs) in the allotments. A minimal positive benefit would be received through a successful re-vegetation effort, thus increasing preferred forage plants within this mid to low producing rangeland. However, the cumulative impacts from past, present, and possible future oil and gas activities may have a long-term effect on the native range's carrying capacity, thus influencing the authorized AUMs. This possible effect would be determined during the grazing permit renewal process.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action would be located in an area with a VRM IV classification. The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would be located in an area that is sparsely vegetated and linear clearing of vegetation would not dominate the view of a casual observer. Since there are numerous existing well facilities and power poles/lines, the proposed action would not be the major focus of a casual observer. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be moderate and the objectives of the VRM IV classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no additional environmental consequences.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: The Cumulative impacts of oil and gas developments in this area were analyzed in the White River ROD/RMP, based on a reasonable foreseeable development scenario which assumed a total of ten acres per well pad. This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of this type of activity, was addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action. These power line extensions will serve wells within the Chevron Rangely Field, a developed area, and will not significantly increase cumulative impacts.

REFERENCES CITED:

BERNARD, MARY C.

- 2000 Class III Cultural Resource Inventory For The Uintah Basin Communications Project, Meeker, Rio Blanco County To Utah – Colorado Border, Moffat County.
Intermountain Archaeology Services, Jensen, Utah.

Hand, O. D.

- 1994 Cultural Resource Surveys of Maintenance Locations along State Highways 13 and 64, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Archaeological Unit, Colorado Department of Transportation, Denver, Colorado.

McKibben, Anne

- 2001 5RB3704: Site Evaluation and Recording Update, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

Späth, Carl

- 2000 Suncor Fletcher Gulch CBM Prospect Wildcat Wells SH-1, SH-2, SH-3 and SH-4 Near Rangely, Rio Blanco County, Colorado Class III Cultural Resource Inventory. Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Greenwood Village, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden

- 1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Caroline Hollowed	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Caroline Hollowed	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Caroline Hollowed	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	Soils
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Vegetation
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Rangeland Management
Linda Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2005-028-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the construction, operation, and maintenance of power line extensions to serve wells in the Rangely Chevron Oil Field as described in the proposed action, with the mitigation measures listed below. This development, with mitigation, is consistent with the decisions in the White River ROD/RMP, and environmental impacts will be minimal.

MITIGATION MEASURES: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you

must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. The applicant will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass, noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods as outlined in the White River ROD/RMP or authorized in advance by the White River Field Office Manager. Application of herbicides must be under field supervision of an EPA certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

4. Powerpoles involved in this action will be designed to deter all raptor perching (i.e., crossarms and pole top) and remain effective in preventing raptor electrocution. It is requested that Moon Lake avoid drilling directly into any prairie dog burrow or mound system when installing powerlines. All powerline installation should involve as little vehicle travel as is necessary. It is requested in those instances where the powerlines will run cross-country (not adjacent to existing road) that Moon Lake employ the technique of back pulling when possible.

5. The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

6. Re-establishing vegetation as soon as allowable would be favorable to control any erosion problems that may occur. Best management practices will need to be implemented to collect salts leaching from soils if it becomes a problem on the surface.

8. Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas associated with the proposed action, including all cut and fill slopes and topsoil stockpiles, with Standard Seed Mix #1 of the White River ROD/RMP (B-19, Appendix B). Seeding rates in the White River ROD/RMP are shown as pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application, double the seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. Applied seed must be certified and free of noxious weeds and seed certification tags must be submitted to the Area Manager within 30 days of seeding.

White River ROD/RMP (Appendix B; B-19) Seed Mix # 1

Species (Variety)	Lbs PLS/ Acre	Range sites
Siberian wheatgrass (P27)	3	Alkaline Uplands, Badlands, Clayey 7"-9", Clayey Salt Desert, Cold Desert Breaks, Cold Desert Overflow, Gravelly 7"-9", Limey Cold Desert, Loamy 7"-9", Loamy Cold Desert, Loamy Salt Desert, Saline Lowland, Salt Desert Breaks, Salt Flats, Salt Meadow Sands 7"-9", Sandy 7"-9", Sandy Cold Desert, Sandy Salt Desert, Shale 7"-9", Shale/Sands Complex, Shallow Loamy, Shallow Sandy, Shallow Slopes, Silty Salt Desert, Silty Swale, Steep Slopes
Russian wildrye (Bozoisky)	2	
Crested wheatgrass (Hycrest)	3	

9. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized

officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

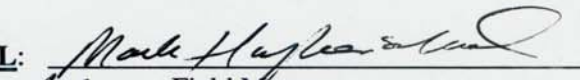
10. Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: The power line ROW will be monitored by White River Field Office Staff on a five-year interval.

NAME OF PREPARER: Linda Jones

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:


Acting Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

3/11/05

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibits A and B
Location map of the Proposed Action

Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2005-028-EA

